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ABSTRACT

Ways in which a sense of community can be fostered within a school are examined in this literature review. The text opens with an overview of the conceptual framework and rationale for community, focusing on the collegiality among students rather than among adults or between adults and students. The sources used for the review were identified by searching the ERIC and PsychLlit databases and by examining references in published studies. Most of the sources had been published in peer-reviewed journals and books, and they address two major areas of inquiry: those dealing directly with belongingness (a psychological variable measured by examining students' perspectives about their own experience) and those that do not deal directly with belongingness but shed light on various aspects of it. The review describes research addressing the need for belongingness, including the development of basic psychological processes; attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to school success; attitudes toward self and others; participation and engagement; achievement; students' sense of community in school; peer relationships, their development and importance; structuring schools and classes to support student community; the classroom climate; authority relations and autonomy; and other organizational characteristics. (Contains 91 references.) (RJM)

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Student Community within the School Context: A Research Synthesis

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Hargreaves, Earl, and Ryan (1996) echo the voice of many researchers and educators who believe that "one of the most fundamental reforms needed in secondary or high school education is to make schools into better communities of caring and support for young people" (p. 77). This term "community" is used in similar ways in the literature. Sergiovanni (1994), for example, refers to community as a "bonding together of people in special ways and the binding of them to shared values and ideas"(p.4). McMillan and Chavis (1986) propose that the term has two major uses. The first refers to a territorial or geographic unit; the second is relational and describes the quality or character of human relationships. For this discussion, the primary concern is the relational nature of community within organizational boundaries, in this case, the school. Operationally, McMillan and Chavis propose that community consists of four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and a shared emotional connection. A community exists when its members experience a sense of belonging or personal relatedness. In a community, the members feel that the group is important to them and that they are important to the group – they matter. Third, members of a community feel that the group is an important source of resources to satisfy their needs. Finally, the community has a shared and emotional sense of connection. In short, "sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9).

The significance of community is reflected in the work of Dewey and Vygotsky. Both view education as a social rather than individualistic process. Recognizing children's interpersonal needs and the importance of collaborative activities for experiential learning, Dewey promoted the idea that students should function as a social group. The quality of education, he argued, "is realized in the degree in which individuals form a group" (1958, p. 65). It is the teacher and school's responsibility to encourage the development of this sense of community by designing communal activities to which all contribute. As

Dewey envisioned it, teachers and students share membership in this community and it is through collaboration that learning occurs. To be a member of a community, one must feel that one is part of a group; and, in the school, that community consists of students and teachers.

Despite the arguments for community as the basis for learning and an emotional support mechanism, schools as educational institutions pay scant attention to the socioemotional needs of students, individually or collectively. Academic achievement is the main priority; and shaping the school culture are beliefs and practices that nurture individualism and competition, rather than community and collaboration. An integral part of this culture are organizational policies and practices that systematically prevent and preclude the development of community among students and directly contribute to students' experience of isolation, alienation, and polarization (Hargreaves, Earl, &Ryan, 1996). Kunc (1992) attributes these practices to an institutionalized set of beliefs about schooling. The first is that personal and emotional needs of students are met at home or in social relationships outside of the classroom. The second is that achievement and mastery are more important than the sense of belonging. The third is that belonging is not a precondition for engagement, but a reward for compliance and achievement.

The purpose of this literature review is to examine some of those assumptions empirically. Using MacMillan & Chavis' definition, the sense of community is a feeling of belonging within a group. Why is this sense of community important in an educational setting? Do students currently experience school as a community? How do schools influence students' sense of community?

Conceptual Framework and Rationale

An integrative review in this area is warranted for several reasons. Current work in psychology tells us that the sense of community, this experience of belonging, is an important factor in understanding student behavior and performance. According to motivational researchers, relatedness is one of three basic psychological needs that are essential to human growth and development – as well as autonomy and competence (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1995). This need for relatedness involves the need to feel securely connected with others in the environment and to experience oneself as worthy of love and respect. The satisfaction of these needs affects psychological development and the overall experience of well-being and health even if one is not aware of needing these

experiences (Ryan, 1995). When student needs are not satisfied in educational settings, Deci et al. (1991) predict diminished motivation, impaired development, alienation and poor performance.

There are three particularly important aspects of this model with respect to the discussion of relatedness in the school setting. First, the social context plays a significant part in determining whether individual needs are satisfied. Second, needs are domain and situation specific; and third, needs are on-going. Contexts differ in the extent to which they address individual needs and people (including students) can be expected to function optimally depending on the extent to which these basic needs are satisfied. Consequently, motivation and performance will differ depending on the specific context. As Ryan (95) explains, students who experience belongingness in school but not in sports will function better in the context where the needs are satisfied. Further, the needs must be met on an ongoing basis.

Organizational research has long incorporated this basic relationship between context and behavior recognizing that conditions in the workplace profoundly affect worker behavior and performance. The use of these principles in the field of educational administration is more recent. In 1988, Susan Moore Johnson wrote that school researchers had only begun to acknowledge this important principle. Thanks to the work of researchers such as Johnson (1990), Lieberman (1988), Little (1982), and Rosenholtz (1989), we now have a much clearer idea of how work conditions in school influence teacher practice. Specifically, we know that collegiality is perhaps the single most important organizational characteristic influencing teachers' professional commitment, sense of efficacy, and performance. Accordingly school reforms have developed various strategies for enhancing this sense of community among teachers. Kruse & Louis (1997), for example, describe the importance of teaming as a basis for creating this revitalizing network to provide emotional and moral support, personal dignity, intellectual assistance and personal encouragement. It is commonly accepted, and documented, that the interaction and dialogue that are central to the notion of collegiality not only satisfy emotional needs but lead to personal and professional learning. It is also understood that the organization can influence the development of this sense of community by the structural arrangements it utilizes, the processes it adopts, and the values it conveys.

Schlecty (1997) argues that schools are also workplaces for students. In theory, if the lessons of organizational research are sound, students, too, should benefit from opportunities to experience collegiality in the workplace. Despite the current preoccupation with developing community among

schools, discussion of developing collegiality among students themselves is often missing with the major emphasis placed on improving the nature of relationships either among adults or between adults and students. This paper, then, adopts this motivational perspective looking at the interface between organizational policy and practice and worker motivation and performance.

Procedures

The question posed was an exploratory one and the selection of research sources was an on-going process guided by principles of qualitative research. Using Wiseman's (1974) metaphor, the qualitative researcher is like a detective, developing hunches, pursuing leads, and looking for evidence, until a picture begins to emerge. The different sources were identified by searching the ERIC and PsychLit databases and by examining references in published studies. The majority of the sources are studies published in peer-reviewed journals and books. I have also relied on research reviews and several unpublished papers.

The work reported here is drawn from two major areas of inquiry. The first are studies dealing directly with belongingness, relatedness or sense of community in which belongingness is defined as a psychological variable and measured by examining students' perspectives about their own experience. There is relatively little research in this area and I believe that the work presented here is relatively inclusive. A second set of studies while not directly dealing with belongingness from the individual perspective nonetheless sheds light on different aspects of the issue. These studies deal with friendship, peer acceptance or rejection, and dropout and provide insight on patterns of peer relationships in schools and factors that affect them. The studies presented here are by no means inclusive of the body of research that is available, but they do provide important information which helps to understand different dimensions of the problem.

The research review consists of two sections. The first examines the significance of the sense of community as a psychological need. How important is this need and with what effects is it associated? Findings from educational settings are organized around 1) development of basic psychological processes that play an important role in student success, 2) academic attitudes and motives and 3) social and personal attitudes 4) engagement and participation and 5) academic achievement. The second section deals with the sense of community in schools: what do we know about students' experience of community in schools and in what ways do schools influence students' sense of belonging and the development of community?

The Need for Belongingness: Its Significance and Manifestations

Baumeister and Leary (1995) conducted an extensive review of the literature to determine whether there was sufficient empirical evidence to conclude that the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation. They defined this need as "a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (p. 497). A fundamental motivation, they argued, should apply to all people, operate in a wide variety of settings, and effect emotional and cognitive patterns. Further, the failure to satisfy the need should produce pathological and long-lasting consequences. The researchers note that while the need to belong is not a new idea, there is now a large body of empirical evidence to evaluate the hypothesis. Based on their review of this evidence (including over 300 citations, none of which are included here), they determined that the need to belong is associated with differences in cognitive processes, emotional patterns, behavior, and health and well being. With respect to cognition, they note that the sense of relatedness effects people's perceptions of others with a tendency to view friends and group members more favorably and to think about them in more complex ways. They think about them more, they think about them more deeply, and they view them more favorably. Being accepted, included, or welcomed leads to variety of positive emotions-happiness, elation, contentment, calm- while being rejected, excluded, or ignored leads to intense negative feelings including anxiety, depression, grief, jealousy, and loneliness. The lack of belongingness is also associated with incidence of mental, physical illness, and a broad range of behavioral problems ranging from traffic accidents to criminality and suicide. Rejected children, as well as adults, show a much higher incidence of psychopathology. Being part of a supportive network reduces stress while being deprived of stable relationships has far-reaching negative consequences. They deal with the issue of causality arguing: "The weight of evidence suggests that lack of belongingess is a primary cause" (p. 511). Their overall conclusion is a strong statement. From their perspective, "the desire for interpersonal attachment may well be one of the most far-reaching and integrative constructs currently available to understand human nature. If psychology has erred with regard to the need to belong, in our view, the error has not been to deny the existence of such a motive so much as to underappreciate it"(p. 522).

Other research links relatedness or belongingness to outcomes of particular significance in educational settings. The research is organized around five outcomes: 1) development of basic

psychological processes that play an important role in student success, 2) academic attitudes and motives and 3) social and personal attitudes 4) engagement and participation and 5) academic achievement

Development of basic psychological processes

Ryan (95) argues that satisfaction of the three basic needs (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) supports the development of important psychological processes including intrinsic motivation, internalization, and emotional integration. The person who is intrinsically motivated actively engages in behaviors out of personal choice rather than external requirement. These behaviors reflect an internal drive to seek out challenges and opportunities to expand knowledge and experience. Internalization refers to the assimilation of external regulation into the self. In the school or classroom, this internalization presents itself as a willingness to accept social norms, values, and regulations. The third process, emotional integration, basically refers to self-control or the ability to control emotions, drives, and impulses. The experience of relatedness also supports the development of a sense of autonomy, identity, and intimacy.

One study (Anderson, Manoogian, & Reznick, 1976) suggests that when children are denied personal involvement, they can lose intrinsic motivation. Initially a study of the effect of external awards on intrinsic motivation, the purpose shifted with an unexpected finding in the control group. There were two control groups. In each case, the experimenter was to introduce himself to the students and ask them to continue their work while he completed his own work. Although there were predictable declines in motivation given the three reward conditions, the greatest decline occurred in the control group. The researchers then conducted additional experiments, modifying the behavior of the experiment. In Control 1, the experimenter was present but ignored the child. In Control 2, the experimenter was present and attentive. The greatest decline occurred in Control 1. The researchers noted that to interpret data with certainty would require an understanding of the situation from the child's perspective, but the findings suggest that the absence of any relationship with the experimenter, the experience of being ignored, may have contributed to the decline.

In a longitudinal study of 4515 students from grades 3-6 in multiple districts and schools, Battistich, Solomon, Kim,Watson, & Schaps (1995) found a correlation between student's sense of community and both intrinsic academic motivation and autonomy. A study by Wentzel & Asher (1995) of 423 sixth and seventh grade students in an ethnically diverse, Midwest, working class school affirms the

relationship between relatedness, self-regulation, and internalization, finding that children who were categorized as rejected or controversial were less likely to follow rules and perceived as less independent. A study of 115 4th and 5th graders found teacher influence positively correlated with prosocial goals; children rated by teachers as prosocial were more likely to regard the teacher as a significant influence and to adopt the teacher's social standards (Pietrucha & Erdley, 1996). (Ryan & Powelson (1995) also cite work by Ryan & Stiller (1991) linking the interpersonal relationships to internalization.)

There is some controversy in the literature about the impact of supportive relationships on autonomy. Is it, for example, necessary for children to begin to sever their emotional ties with parents or other adults as they seek to establish their own sense of autonomy? Arguing from an empirical base, Ryan (1995) and Deci et al. (1991) persuasively forward the position that autonomy develops most effectively in situations where children and teenagers feel a sense of relatedness and closeness to, rather than disaffiliation from, significant adults. Since the three psychological needs are basic and integrated, the satisfaction of one need reinforces and supports the other needs. With respect to relatedness, Ryan maintains that "the higher the perceived quality of relatedness, the greater one's feelings of autonomy and competence" (p. 419). Several studies provide support.

Grolnick & Ryan (1989) studied the relationship between dimensions of parent child interaction and school outcomes including academic self-regulation, school competence, behavioral adjustment in a population of 480 children in grades 3-6 of a suburban northeast district. The researchers rated parent interviews on autonomy support, involvement, and structure. Autonomy ratings were based on expressions of value for autonomy (in contrast to obedience and conformity); use of autonomy techniques (reasoning, encouragement, empathic limit setting vs. punishment and controlling use of rewards); and non-directiveness (inclusion of child in decisions and problem-solving, vs. imposition of parental agenda without choice). Involvement included parental knowledge of child, time spent, and enjoyment. Parental involvement (responses from mother and father) was significantly related only to perceptions of control. Maternal involvement, however, was significantly correlated with 6 of 9 dependent variables. Involvement was positively correlated with higher grades, standardized achievement, teacher-rated competence and negatively associated with students' perceived unknown control (extent to which children did have an understanding of sources of control in their environment), acting out in the classroom and learning

problems. Levels of maternal involvement were not associated with work status suggesting that availability regarding school issues may be the critical dimension.

In a second study, Grolnick and colleagues again examined the relationship between paternal autonomy support, involvement, and students' inner resources (perceptions regarding control, autonomy, and competence) (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). In this study, however, the researchers based their assessment of parental behavior on children's perceptions. The findings were similar with one respect. In this study, autonomy support and involvement from fathers as well as from mothers predicted students' inner resources. One explanation was that "children's feelings (italics added) that their fathers are concerned with an involved with them is more critical than more objective ratings would suggest" (p. 515). This interpretation is consistent with the view offered by Bauermeister and Leary (1995) that the most important part is the person's feelings or experience of the context. The three motivational variables (perceived competence, sense of control, and perceptions of autonomy), in turn, predicted children's performance as measured by grades, achievement, and teacher ratings of competence. [The authors also cite studies linking lower levels of involvement to disobedience and aggression (Hatfield, Ferguson, & Alpert, 1967) and higher levels with competence and achievement motivation (Pulkkinen, 1982)].

Moore & Boldero (1991) examining the relationship between psychosocial development and friendship among secondary and college students found a positive correlation between satisfaction with friendships and levels of identity and intimacy, namely sense of self and the ability to have a mutually satisfying relationship with another. While girls viewed close friendships as more important and put more effort into maintaining friendships, the associations between friendship and these two measures of maturity were stronger for boys suggesting that friendships may be more important for the psychosocial development of boys. A study by Ryan & Lynch (1989) also shows that individuation during adolescence is facilitated by attachment, as long as the relationships respects individual autonomy.

Summary

The need for belongingness, to develop satisfying interpersonal relationships, is a basic human need. The experience of belongingness affects how people think about others and how they feel about themselves and their lives. Whether people experience belongingness is reflected in their physical and mental health and in their behavior. Being part of a supportive network contributes to a state of well being;

its absence leads to a wide range of mental, physical and behavioral problems including anxiety, depression, grief, aggression, and criminality.

Research in an educational context shows that the experience of belongingness or relatedness is associated with important psychological processes: intrinsic motivation, internalization, emotional integration or self-regulation, autonomy, identify and intimacy.

There is little commonality among these studies, in terms of the variables or the settings. With respect to variables, the studies deal with personal involvement and intrinsic motivation in an experimental setting, parental involvement and classroom behavior, peer acceptance or rejection and classroom behavior, prosocial behavior and interpersonal attitudes, and friendships. In one non-attentiveness or involvement of the experimenter apparently stimulated a decline in intrinsic motivation. A second looked at the relationship between parent involvement and classroom behavior. Another defined the independent variable as peer acceptance; and another simply looked carefully at prosocial children. Only one study specifically examined students' sense of community. While these studies in and of themselves tell us very little about students' experience of belongingness in a school context, the findings are theoretically consistent and do serve to emphasize the importance of this basic psychological need. What this small group of studies suggests is that the experience of belongingness does affect children's perceptions and that these perceptions are associated with motivation and behavior. When children experience positive involvement with others, they are more likely to demonstrate intrinsic motivation, to accept the authority of others while at the same time establishing a stronger sense of identity, experiencing their own sense of autonomy and accepting responsibility to regulate their own behavior in the classroom.

Attitudes, Beliefs and Behaviors Related to School Success

Certain attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are associated with success in a school setting. Some of these relate to the work itself; others deal with beliefs about the self and others in the school as a social context.

Academic Attitudes and motives

The first set of studies deals with a broad spectrum of academic attitudes and motives while defining relatedness in different ways.

Battistich et al. (1995) examined the relationship between students' sense of community and 12 measures of academic attitudes and motives including enjoyment, liking, task orientation, ego orientation, preference for challenge, intrinsic academic motivation, expectations and aspirations. All variables except expectations showed a significant relationship with the sense of school community with the strongest effects on enjoyment of class, liking for school, and task orientation. The study also examined the effect of poverty and found that while poverty was negatively correlated with school community and various student outcomes, that "the sense of school community showed its strongest positive relationships with student outcomes in high poverty schools" (p. 649).

In a study of 125 children from eight kindergarten classes in four Midwestern schools, Ladd (1990) examined the relative impact of friendships and peer acceptance on various aspects of school adjustment including liking, attitudes toward teachers and activities, manifest anxiety and school avoidance (absences from class). Findings showed that classroom peer status had a more significant impact than friendships on significantly predicting school perceptions, school involvement and performance. Rejected children had significantly less favorable perceptions of school, higher levels of school avoidance, and lower levels of school performance than did popular, average, or neglected children.

Wentzel & Asher (1995) examined the relationship between peer status and motivation to achieve academically as measured by commitment to school, interest in school (based on teacher and student reports), effort, and concern with earning positive evaluations. With respect to academic motivation, the study found that neglected children reported higher levels of school motivation than any other group. (It is important to note that the neglected children while selected neither as most or least liked, shared with their popular classmates high levels of positive interaction with peers.) Rejected children with submissive behavior patterns did not differ from the average students on any academic characteristics; but those who were perceived as more aggressive, showed significantly less interest in schoolwork than did their average peers.

Is the sense of belongingness related to expectations for success, students' interest in school, effort and achievement? Goodenow (1993a,b,c) is the sole or primary author of three studies dealing with these questions. In each study, belongingness parallels the construct of relatedness as defined by Ryan, Deci, and Connell & Wellborn. Two studies examined the sense of school membership; the third looked at classroom

belonging. The first used data from a sample of 5-8th grade students in 1 suburban middle school and two urban junior high schools. Findings showed that students' sense of school membership made a substantial contribution to variance in expectancy and value (r square = .18 and .30 respectively), but was only weakly associated with effort.

The second study looked at the influence of classroom belonging on expectancy, value, and effort in a suburban white middle class school. Analysis identified three factors of belongingness: positive relations with classmates, teacher support, and general sense of belonging. Again, the sense of belonging positively correlated with expectancy and value (accounting for over 1/3 of variance in expectancy). Of the three factors, teacher support was most important predictor but peer support also contributed significantly. General sense of belonging contributed only to expectancy. Peer support was strongly associated with value for boys only. With respect to effort and achievement, expectancy was the best attitudinal predictor with class belonging as second highest correlate. Of the three belonging factors, however, teacher support was most highly correlated; peer support showed no significant effect.

A third study (Goodenow & Grady, 1993) carried this research into an urban working class city with a large Hispanic and African American population. Using the PSSM (Psychological Sense of School Membership) to assess the sense of belonging, the researchers found a significant correlation between school belonging, value of schoolwork, expectancy and persistence even when controlling for the influence of friends' values. School belongingness scores in theses school were noticeably lower than those in the suburban white school and the relationships were strong with school belonging correlated with all outcome measures and accounting for 19% of variance in expectancy, 21% in general school motivation, and 30% in value. (General school motivation here refers to beliefs and feelings that being in school is satisfying, worthwhile, and important.) The PSSM includes items that involve perceived acceptance, liking and inclusion by peers and adults.

Attitudes toward Self and Others

In general, the experience of belonging or relatedness is associated with more positive attitudes toward self and others. In their review of the research, Baumeister and Leary (1995) report that when people have social attachments or perceive themselves to be part of a group, helping behavior increases, with even the opportunity to talk with strangers leading to increased cooperation. People also view friends

and members of their group differently: They think about them more, they think about them in more complex ways, and they view them more favorably. Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama (1983) tested this finding in schools and found evidence that cooperative learning situations promoted more positive interpersonal relationships in cross-ethnic, mainstreaming and homogeneous groups than conditions that utilized group or interpersonal competition or individualistic learning.

When students experience acceptance in the school community (whether defined as class or school), they demonstrate more concern for and acceptance of others, including those not in the friendship group, as well as more helping and consideration of others. The Battistich et al (1995) study examined the relationship between school community and social and personal attitudes, motives and behavior. Operationally, this variable included concern for others, conflict resolution, acceptance of outgroups, intrinsic prosocial motivation, democratic values, altruistic behavior, and self-esteem. The sense of school community was significantly related to each variable with the exception of democratic values. The researchers noted however, that most of the effect sizes were small with the largest being for concern for others (ES=.30) and intrinsic prosocial motivation (ES=.24). Their list of academic outcomes described above also included respect and trust for teachers and enjoyment from helping others, which seem pertinent in this category as well. With respect to beliefs about self, researchers also found a significant correlation with sense of autonomy and sense of efficacy.

Wentzel & Asher also examined dimensions of prosocial behavior associated with various levels of peer acceptance. In this study, neglected and popular children (in contrast with rejected and controversial students) were rated more positively by teachers on pro-social behavior and both groups showed more evidence of positive and prosocial interaction with peers. These data, I believe, reflect the methodological problems involved in measuring peer acceptance using standard peer nomination procedures. They confirm the importance of rejection but suggest that peer acceptance is very different from popularity.

While peer acceptance is associated with positive social behavior, peer rejection is consistently associated with anti-social behaviors, including withdrawal and aggression (Erdley & Pietrucha , 1996) cited in Pietrucha & Erdley ,1996) Rather than attributing these maladaptive behaviors to social incompetence, Baumeister and Leary (1995) see much of this maladaptive or inappropriate behavior as

"desperate attempts to establish or maintain relationships with other people or sheer frustration and purposelessness when one's need to belong goes unmet" (p. 521).

The research reviewed here links various aspects of belongingness with levels of self-efficacy (Battistich, et al., 1995), self-esteem (Bishop & Inderbitzen, 1995); expressed need for belongingness and general perceptions of the quality of life (Green, Forehand, Beck, & Vosk,1980) and stress. The Green et al. study found that children who were not accepted expressed higher needs for belongingness and greater dissatisfaction with the quality of life. Bishop & Inderbitzen found that students with at least one reciprocal friend had significantly higher self-esteem scores than did those without any reciprocal friends but scores of those with only one reciprocal friend did not differ significantly from those students with two or more reciprocal friends. Peer acceptance status, based on peer nominations, was unrelated to levels of self-esteem among 542 ninth-graders.

Brown & Lohr (1987) studied peer-group affiliation and self-esteem finding that self-esteem varied depending on perceived affiliation with and perceived status of that group. To determine crowd membership, they asked a sample of students to identify major "crowds", to list stereotypic traits, assign status rank, and list 5 members of the group. The "crowds", in order of status, were jocks, populars, normals, druggies/toughs, and nobodies (low in social skills and/or intellectual abilities). Another crowd, the brains, was omitted because it was mentioned by less than half of the raters but the report doesn't indicate how the assigned members of that group were treated. To identify "outsiders", the crowd-member sample received a list of randomly selected classmates checking names of those they recognized. The 15% of the class who received the fewest checks were classified as outsiders. Outsiders were categorized as envious (those who wanted to be members of a group), independents (those who were satisfied with their loner status) and distorters who saw themselves as part of a group. Self-esteem among the envious and the distorters was significantly lower than the two highest status groups (jocks and populars) but self-esteem among independents was not appreciably lower than in any other crowd.

Summary

Those children who experienced a stronger sense of belonging had more positive feelings about schools and their own ability to succeed. They were more committed to and involved in school and class activities. Conversely, those students who experienced rejection in the classroom had unfavorable

perceptions of school and were far less interested in school and schoolwork. Children with a sense of belonging like school better, feel better about themselves, and work harder than those students who feel that they don't belong. One study determined that peer status has more important impact on school adjustment than did friendship. This addresses a persistent theme in the research: does a friendship provide enough support to mitigate the effects of group rejection. Ladd's study says no as does other work that will be presented later.

Children who experience acceptance in the community, whether defined as school or classroom, demonstrate more positive attitudes and have more positive and supportive interactions with others. Positive interaction is not necessarily associated with "popularity", but it is associated with positive attitudes towards self and others and more positive interpersonal behavior.

If students who experience community have more favorable attitudes toward others, they also view themselves more positively with higher levels of self-efficacy, an important cognitive perception linked to school success. Findings on self-esteem are inconsistent. Bishop & Inderbitzen (1995) found that friendship but not peer acceptance was related to self-esteem. Brown & Lohr (1987) however, showed self-esteem as a function of peer crowd status and the individual's relative need for peer acceptance.

Some of these inconsistencies may be related to conceptual and methodological problems. Peer acceptance is conceptually different from the experience of belongingness. Peer acceptance is typically based on classmates' assessment of other students' popularity or liking. While this method may tell us something about the student's experience, it is not necessarily an accurate representation of that student's feelings. Peer nomination procedures typically ask students to designate classmates who are most or least liked. In some cases, the students being so rated are within the same class. In other cases, they are other students in the school. The meaning of the ratings may vary depending on the setting. Most secondary schools are departmentalized and students participate in different group settings throughout the day. A student may not be widely recognized, popular, or liked in the school population but may have very positive experiences within a particular class or track. We know that students have different experiences by class but, as in friendship studies, we don't know the relative impact of these experiences on students' perceptions.

Other research also suggests that individuals' needs for interaction and acceptance differ thereby affecting their perception of the setting and their experience of belongingness. Wong and Csikszentmihalyi (1991), for example, show that students with high needs for affiliation spent more time thinking about social interaction than did those with lower needs and that needs and experienced differed by gender. Girls had higher needs for affiliation, spent more time interacting with others, and enjoyed that time. It was a very different story for boys, however. Those boys with high needs for affiliation viewed themselves as feminine, and felt worse about themselves whether they were alone or with others than boys with lower affiliation needs. Boys with the strongest needs to be liked and involved with others are less likely to demonstrate dominance characteristics that are associated with male status and popularity in the peer group more likely to experience non-acceptance, and more likely to have the strongest emotional reaction to non-acceptance.

Participation and Engagement

Conceptually, these variables can be distinct; however, their use in the research often overlaps with participation defined in terms of frequency as well as the quality of student participation in classroom as well as after-school activity.

Finn's theory of school withdrawal maintained that identification with the school was an important factor sustaining school involvement and that participation in school activities contributed to identification (Finn, 1989). More recent research, however, suggests the relationship be reversed: that higher levels of student identification with school contribute to higher levels of student participation, not the reverse (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Haskell, 1997). Leithwood and colleagues define participation in terms of response to requirements, class related initiative, extra curricular activities, and decision-making, an operationalization that incorporates many aspects of engagement. [Baumeister and Leary (1995) cite similar findings by Hoyle and Crawford showing that involvement of university students in activities was related to sense of belonging.]

In terms of classroom involvement, several studies link levels of participation to a sense of community: where students' experience risk, participation levels decline; as students' sense of community increases, their sense of personal risk decreases, and participation increases. Johnson, Lutzow, Strothoff, & Zannis (1995), for example, adopted an action research model in an effort to reduce negative behavior by

encouraging supportive relationships among students through cooperative learning and bonding activities within and between classes. At the completion of the project researchers found that behavioral referrals had dropped by as much as 71% and students indicated a higher level of comfort and satisfaction with the group. Students indicated a greater ability to make friends easily and naturally, to express their ideas and feelings and make mistakes in the group without worrying about being put down. Observers also noticed that, in informal activities, students tended to stay in the larger group rather than separating into factions as they had in prior years.

Another study (Jones & Gerig, 1994) emphasizes the importance of peer acceptance in classroom interaction, as distinct from teacher support. In a study of sixth graders, the researchers found that a major factor influencing student-teacher interactions were students' perceptions of themselves and the classroom environment with students being reluctant to participate because of anticipated reactions from peers. The observers described the team teachers in the study as "warm and caring" and found an equitable distribution of teacher-initiated communication with students. The "silent" students themselves were not significantly different from other students with respect to gender, race, or achievement but they seldom initiated interaction (mean of less than one interaction for 3 of 4 academic subjects based on 14 observations). In interviews, common themes emerged. The majority of the silent students (67%) were serious about school and wanted to do well but many lacked confidence (50%), had few or no friends (40%), and 72% viewed themselves as shy expressing their fear of making mistakes and being laughed at or embarrassed in front of others. 19% traced their reactions to painful prior experiences where their input had been ignored or ridiculed. Silence was a way of avoiding personal risk. In this case, silent students clearly did not experience themselves to be part of a supportive peer group. While this had no apparent effect on achievement with silent students achieving at similar levels to their peers, the behavioral and emotional impact is apparent. Several students also described low levels of engagement spending most of the time daydreaming but not enough to affect their grades.

College women reported similar feelings in an interview study (Aleman, 1997). Even in this small and relatively homogeneous setting, students expressed concerns about peer judgment in the classroom describing impersonal relations with classmates and their fear of criticism. "Women often gauged the risk of speaking in class by the degree to which they 'knew' the other class members." If they "knew" them,

they would be trusted not to criticize their thinking in a degrading manner. In classrooms where they didn't know people, they were "unlikely to ask questions, express a minority opinion, play the devil's advocate, or publicly wrestle with ideas" (p. 36).

Engagement, as distinct from participation, is a multidimensional variable including behaviors, emotions, and psychological orientation (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Newmann, 1992). Students who are engaged are interested in learning, enjoy challenges and persist in completion of tasks. Here research shows that satisfaction of the basic psychological needs, including relatedness, influences the level of engagement.

Connell & Wellborn (1991) collected data to test this theory from students, parents, and teachers in three samples: Grades 3-6 in a rural/suburban community, grades 4-6 in a working class, suburban school district, and a grades 7-10 in a predominantly minority urban setting. The samples included 245, 542, and 700 students. Regarding relatedness, the study found that emotional security with parents, teachers, and classmates was significantly associated with teacher ratings of engagement. A sense of emotional security with teachers (.23, $p<.001$) and with peers (.21, $p< .001$) had a stronger correlation with engagement than did security with parents (.13, $p<.05$).

Probably the most significant study in this area is a later study by Connell et al. (1995) designed to test a theoretical model linking student engagement, students' experience of relatedness, and risk behavior. Theoretically, the researchers proposed that perceptions of support and involvement from significant others shape students' beliefs about themselves in school. These self-perceptions affect behavior and specifically engagement. Engagement contributes directly to performance and adjustment and the individual's experience of support, "as significant others react to the individual's behavior in the setting"(p. 44). Analyses of longitudinal data gathered from 443 urban African American adolescents from grades 7-9 through grades 10-12 revealed that students who avoided risk behaviors in junior high school (attendance, suspensions, grades, test scores, grade retention) and were more engaged were more likely to remain in high school 3 years later. As predicted, engaged students reported more positive perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness in the school setting than students who were less engaged did. The study further demonstrated that students' relationships with adults and peers made an independent contribution to engagement. Path analysis showed the experience of support significantly predicted

students' level of school engagement; this in turn predicted lower levels of risk behavior. As in other studies, here, too, the support relationship with adults in school had more effect on students' psychological state than support from home.

Feelings of rejection/alienation are the flip side of the relatedness coin. Findings regarding the effects of non-acceptance and specifically rejection are consistent and clear. Rejection or the sense of exclusion or estrangement from group is consistently associated with behavioral problems in the classroom, lower interest in school, lower achievement, and withdrawal from school. Research also shows that peer and adult relationships in school play a more important role than the home or family.

To identify the factors contributing to dropout and delinquency, Elliott and Voss (1974) designed a study to track 2617 9th grade students selected from 8 California metropolitan schools from 9th grade until graduation. Their design was based on a theoretical model predicting that dropout and delinquency would occur through a process in which students would experience failure leading to social isolation or normlessness and subsequently delinquency and dropout. What they found was that alienation from the school, rather than the home or community, was the major factor in dropout. The study measured two dimensions of alienation: normlessness and school isolation. The way that normlessness was operationalized, by items examining liking for school and conformity to accepted school norms, is conceptually similar to engagement. Isolation (similar to identification or belongingness) included participation in activities, a feeling of centrality, and trust relationship with teachers. Very similar to later findings of Connell et al. (1995), this study found that normlessness in the school is the strongest predictor of delinquency and dropout. Although academic failure, school normlessness and social isolation all predicted dropout, analyses determined that academic achievement and school normlessness (engagement) accounted for virtually all of the predictive power of social isolation in school while social isolation itself contributed little independent explanatory power. Interestingly, the study also determined that while delinquency contributes to leaving school, delinquency rates decline after dropout, a fact that reinforced the researchers view that "the school is the critical generating milieu for delinquency"(p. 203).

Other work focused specifically on the role of peer acceptance in adjustment. Noting a relatively recent interest in children's peer relationships and acceptance of the idea that low peer acceptance places children at risk on various dimensions of social and cognitive adjustment, Parker & Asher (1987)

conducted a review of the literature regarding effect of low peer acceptance on adjustment in later life. Exploring links between peer acceptance, school drop out, criminality, and adult mental health, they concluded, as did Elliott & Voss (1974), that there is strong and clear evidence of a predictive link between low acceptance and dropping out of school.

Additional support for this perspective comes from an interview study of 100 Pittsburgh school leavers who eventually returned to complete their schooling in a job corps program (Altenbaugh, Engel, and Martin, 1995). Their central finding was that dropouts felt alienated and estranged from their schools- teachers and peers- as well as from their homes, neighborhood, and society in general. Although peer acceptance was not a specific focus of the study, there was evidence throughout that peer relationships were problematic for these dropouts with students describing conflict, teasing, harassment and fights. They perceived schools as uncaring environments and experienced no sense of school membership. Association with other potential dropouts increased pressure to reject school norms and values while association with more successful students led to feelings of inferiority and rejection.

Summary

There are two key findings with respect to student participation:

1) Participation is an outgrowth of student identification or sense of belongingness. Students are more likely to participate in classroom or after school activities when they experience sense of belonging. This is an important factor because it addresses what I believe is an embedded assumption: that students develop sense of community through their participation in extra curricular activities or that a strong extra-curricular program will satisfy student needs for a sense of community. These findings suggest that students will not sign up for these activities unless they already experience themselves as being part of a supportive community.
2) Positive interaction and peer acceptance are associated with higher levels of participation and a stronger sense of comfort in the classroom. Conversely, fear of peer rejection reduces involvement even when teacher/student interaction appears to be positive.

Only two studies reported here deal directly with relationship and engagement. The first establishes relationships; the second tests direction. The first establishes a link between the sense of relatedness (parents, teachers, and peers) and student engagement. The second shows that students who

were more engaged avoided risk behaviors and stayed in school. These engaged students felt more support from teachers and peers and this perception of support directly influenced their level of engagement. Students who were engaged perceived more support. In other words, adult support at school affected students' experience of relatedness; this led to higher levels of engagement; and the level of engagement flowed back to impact on continued adult support.

The important points here are that peer support, as well as teacher support, affected students' sense of relatedness; support from adults in school had a greater impact on students' sense of relatedness than support from adults in the home; and the level of student engagement affected the level of support that students perceived. Whether defined as participation or engagement, the level of student involvement is linked causally to the student's sense of relatedness, and peer and teacher support both affect students' sense of community.

Achievement

Studies of peer acceptance and friendship described in more detail later consistently show that high achievement is correlated with peer acceptance and/or peer interaction (Green, Forehand, Beck, & Vosk, 1980; Jules, 1991; Ladd, 1990; Swift & Spivack, 1969; Taylor, 1989; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). Children who are preferred by peers and teachers tend to be those who are academically competent. Conversely, those children who are most frequently rejected tend to be low achievers. In most cases, the data does not establish direction. A logical assumption might be that perceived achievement is a status variable influencing peer acceptance. Examining changes over a two-year period, however, Taylor (1989) concludes that academic achievement in itself does not play a predominant role in predicting peer acceptance. At least one study identifies peer status as a predictor of school performance as well as school perceptions and involvement (Ladd, 1990).

Four studies reported here directly examine belongingness based on student perceptions of their own acceptance within the context of the classroom or school. These show small or nonsignificant relationships between various dimensions of belongingness (relatedness, maternal involvement, parental involvement, school and class membership) and achievement (Battistich, Watson, Solomon, Schaps, & Solomon, 1991; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Goodenow, 1993a; Goodenow, 1993b). Goodenow (1993a) examined the relationship between school membership, motivation (effort, absence, and tardiness), and

academic achievement in the form of grades from 1st quarter and end of year. Data from a sample of 611 students from grades 5-8 in a suburban school showed that school belonging was only weakly associated with effort (r=.25 p<.001), absences (r=-.18, p<.001), and tardiness (r=1.14, p<.01) and somewhat more strongly related to first semester grade (r=.27,p<.001)and to grade point average for the year (r=.33, p<.001).

Goodenow (1993b) assesses students' personal sense of being included, liked and respected in a particular classroom by teachers and peers. Although the study included a large sample of students (N=353), the relationship between classroom belonging, motivation (expectancy and value), effort, and achievement was tested using only English grades from a small a small subset (N=87). Effort and achievement were the dependent variables. The correlation analysis showed that expectancy was the strongest predictor of effort (.422, p<.001) and grade (.625, p<.001) with classroom belonging as the second highest correlate (.341 and .430, p<.001, respectively for effort and grade). Of the three belonging factors, teacher support was most highly correlated with effort (.258,NS) and grade (.375, p<.001) ; peer support had no significant effect.

Battistich et al. (1995) related student sense of community and different measures of cognitive and academic performance: inductive reasoning, reading, writing, standardized achievement test scores in reading and math. Using hierarchical linear modeling, they found only a small and non-significant relationship with measures of performance.

Connell & Wellborn (1991) found that while emotional security with parents, teachers, and classmates (relatedness) was significantly associated with teacher ratings of engagement in school, none of the relatedness variables was significantly correlated with academic performance. Despite the direct relationship, they do establish through path analysis that these measures of emotional security predict student engagement and this in turn predicts school performance.

Grolnick & Ryan (1989) established a link between reports of maternal involvement and grades, test scores, and teacher rated competence. Grolnick et al. (1991) proposed that children's inner resources or psychological perceptions mediated between parental behavior and achievement and were able to determine that parental involvement and autonomy affected children's perceptions of themselves with respect to competence, autonomy, and control. As in Connell & Wellborn's study, these motivational

variables then predicted performance differences. In this study, autonomy had a greater effect than involvement, however. Ryan and others make the point that direction here is unclear as well since certain children's behaviors might engender different forms of parental behavior.

Summary

Relatedness plays an important role in achievement although not a direct one. Its importance seems to be as a mediating variable. When students experience relatedness, this has an impact on performance through its effects on engagement.

Students' Sense of Community in School

The second section deals with the sense of community in schools: what do we know about peer relationships and students' experience of community in schools and in what ways do schools influence students' sense of belonging and the development of community?

Peer relationships and sense of community among students

Descriptive research on the quality of peer relationships among students is nearly non-existent. What little we do know comes in scattered pieces of information gleaned from a variety of sources. We can establish that kids care about the quality of peer relationships in school. Some research also suggests that students do not consider themselves to be part of a supportive student community and that students have few opportunities in the school day to interact with one another.

In a focus group interview study of K-5 student perceptions of school and their role in decision-making, students emphasized the importance of peer relations (Allen, 1995). The students were very aware of interpersonal problems, as well as positive changes that had taken place after one school had eliminated ability grouping. Because they had more opportunities to work with other students, they felt that they were learning better. As they explained: "We learn better in groups. We help other kids learn. It's easier for a kid to put it in words, because we understand how kids think" (p. 295). In this school, a student provided the perspective of a new student coming into the school: "they made me their friends. I was real quiet but they asked me to play with them." Other kids agreed: "There's no kids here who don't have friends" (p. 297). "It's easy to meet friends here, kids introduce you and help with problems, they don't knock you down in line." Their experience contrasted with another school where "everybody calls people names" and " people liked to fight a lot." One student noted the effect in the classroom: "I wouldn't just say anything I

wanted to" (p.295). With respect to peer relations, the author concluded that for students an ideal school would be a place with "friendly people who make everyone feel included" (p.299).

The literature implies that the majority of students have friendships and positive peer relations but there is little research that specifically examines the nature or extent of peer relations – or interaction- in school settings. Several studies, however, do provide information suggesting that a closer focus may be warranted. In Kindermann's (1993) study of 4th and 5th grade students, 13 of 109 (12%) did not belong to any peer group in the classroom. In Bishop & Inderbitzen's (1995) study of 9th grade adolescents, 61 of 542 (over 11%) had no reciprocal friend. Phelps' (1990) study of middle schoolers suggests that at least one middle school did not provide many opportunities for kids to get to know one another. Through interviews Phelps found that peer interactions were almost exclusively limited to out of school activities. Queried about their interaction with friends, "not one student provided an activity that occurred inside or during school." Only 16 of 167 responses had something even remotely to do with school - primarily attending sporting events. Any interaction with friends or other classmates during the day took place outside of the classroom, mostly during the 30-minute lunch period. "School," Phelps reported, "--at least this school--did not provide a great deal of time for students to interact socially with their peers" (p. 133). An unpublished study of peer interaction in a suburban high school (Osterman, McLeod, & Ostrovskaya, 1997) generated similar findings. During class time, the average number of interactions with other classmates tended to be very infrequent but differed by academic level. The average number of interactions based on full-day observation of six students was 8.01 per 50-minute class in special education classes. In middle level and advanced classes, means were 1.54 and 1.76 respectively. For a mid-level student, attending 6 classes per day would have approximately 12 momentary interactions with classmates during the entire day. An interaction was any verbal contact. Typically these were extremely brief consisting of a single comment or question. In very few instances were they part of a dialogue. Over the six-day period, observers noted only four instances of cooperative learning ranging from 6 to 15 minutes. In one situation, 48 of one student's 62 peer interactions for the class occurred during this 12-minute interval. Interactions outside of the classroom were infrequent as well. Of the six students, only one ate lunch in the cafeteria (several went through the entire day without eating lunch) and in only two cases did students (both females) spend more than five minutes with friends in a social situation.

In his study of resilient Hispanic adolescents, Gordon (1996) reports that schools do not satisfy students' belongingness needs and that the environment is not supportive in this area, but there is insufficient information to assess this claim. Measuring student sense of community using a 38-item scale with 3 sub-scales (caring and supportive interpersonal relations in classroom and throughout the school, student autonomy and influence on classroom norms and decisions), Battistich et al. (1995) report that none of the four elementary schools showed high level of sense of community. There was also very little variance between schools.

A study of teaming and sense of belonging (Arhar & Kromrey, 1993) used three measures of social bonding: to peers, teachers, and school. Responses from 4761 7th graders in 22 urban and suburban schools showed that peer-bonding scores were noticeably lower than scores on school or teacher bonding under all conditions and in both low and high SES schools. Using the School Climate Survey developed by Child Study Center School Development Program at Yale University, Osterman (1995) found that perceptions of teacher support were noticeably higher than perceptions of peer support in data from junior high and high school students in an affluent suburban district. Of the 8 factors, perceptions of student relationships were ranked 7th and 8th and perceptions became less favorable with increasing grade levels. (Christine Emmons, Research Director at the Child Study Center confirms that this pattern of relatively low scores for peer support is one that they have also observed in their use of the instrument.)

In their study of school belonging, Goodenow and Grady (1993) also reported that school belonging scores gathered from urban low income schools were only slightly above the midpoint with 41% disagreeing that they belonged or were supported. In contrast, in a study of classroom belonging in a suburban high-income school (using a measure incorporating beliefs about peers and teachers), student responses were well above the 3.0 midpoint (Goodenow, 1993a).

Emphasizing the contextual nature of the issue, in a small parochial school, grades 7-9, only two of 80 students (both girls) were identified as isolates with 91-100% of the classmates making this assessment (Cairns, Perrin, & Cairns, 1985). In a study by Leithwood and associates (Leithwood et al., 1997), belongingness is defined as a component of school identification and addresses relationships with peers and teachers. Collected from a large school district with a strong equity policy, measures of school

identification, incorporating belongingness and valuing, were relatively high. The overall mean was 3.85 on a five-point scale with a stronger response at the elementary level: 3.95 vs. 3.58 at the secondary level.

If we examine peer relationships in classrooms, we find that there may be groups, but group boundaries seldom encompass the entire class. Peers tend to associate with those they define as "friends" and these friends tend to be like themselves in terms of race, class, gender, and most importantly, perceived academic ability (Cairns et al., 1985; Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, 1983; Kagan, 1990; Kinderman, 1993). These friendship groups are visible and highly stable (Cairns et al., 1985; Kinderman, 1993) and students largely restrict positive interactions to other members of the group in and out of the classroom.

Other work also indicates that there are few opportunities for interaction within schools (Anderman & Maehr, 1994) or within classes with little, if any, time devoted to classroom discussion. A study of discourse in 54 high school classes found that the group discussion incorporating student contributions averaged 15 seconds per 50 minute period (Gamoran & Nystrand, 1992). Thirty-three classes had no discussion time at all; only four had more than a minute. These patterns were unaffected by class size; when classes were smaller, students spent more time in individual seatwork.

The Development of Peer Relationships in Schools

Much of the literature dealing with peer acceptance makes the assumption that students' ability to establish positive relationships is self-determined: children who are highly accepted by their peers are more sociable, more socially competent. They may place more value on relationships with others or simply know how to get along with others and do what is necessary to be accepted. Conversely, some argue that rejection, while not condoned, is a predictable and reasonable response to certain behaviors-particularly aggression or withdrawal. This assumption is imbedded in much of the research and implicit in policy recommendations that focus on remediating students' social skills. Motivational theory, however, provides a different lens to frame the problem. Belongingness is a basic need, characteristics of the social context determine whether these needs are met, and apparently "anti-social" behaviors may more appropriately be interpreted as an indicator that needs are not being satisfied in the particular social context. If the need for relatedness is satisfied, this should be evident in collaborative and prosocial behaviors. In what ways, then do schools influence the development of community among students?

According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), the need for belongingness is so powerful that people will develop social attachments very easily and strive to maintain relationships and social bonds even under difficult circumstances. When people have a chance to develop a relationship, the natural response is to move towards a communal orientation even in the face of previous biases. The primary condition necessary for the development of relationships is frequent and affectively positive interaction. [While many studies of peer relationships focus on friendships and particularly mutual friendships, Baumeister & Leary report that while mutuality may be important, more important is the perception that one is cared about.] Theoretically, then, there should be a direct relationship between the frequency and quality of interaction in the classroom and school and students' sense of community.

In general, research shows that peers who are more accepted generally have more positive interactions with other students (Green et al., 1980). Studies in this area show that the level of peer interaction is affected by students' perception of their own acceptance and suggests that positive interaction may be associated with a strong sense of relatedness if not popularity. Jones and Gerig (1994) studied silent six-grade students, those who interacted with teachers very infrequently (less than one time in three of four academic classes over 14 observations). Teachers in the study were described as "exceptionally warm and caring;" they maintained expectations consistent with achievement levels and initiated interaction equitably with silent and non-silent students. The silent students themselves initiated more interactions in science and least in language arts. When these students were interviewed, they reported that they were reluctant to participate in class because of their fear of peer reactions. They were "afraid of being laughed at or embarrassed in front of others"(p. 177). They viewed themselves as being shy (72%). They and were serious about their schoolwork and wanted to do well (67%) but lacked confidence (50%), tended to have few or no friends (40%) and expressed preference for being alone and independent. Their concern about peer reactions often reflected prior painful experiences when peers ignored or laughed at their comments (19%). They admired those who participated frequently (suggesting they themselves would like to be more active participants?) and felt most comfortable when working in small groups with friends (41%): "I learn better in a small group. I don't like to work alone because I don't feel secure with what I'm doing. I like to get other people's input, and I don't like large groups because I feel like I'm talking to the whole world and I

feel uncomfortable. But when I am in a small group of three or four people, I can state my ideas and feel comfortable about them" (pp. 179-80)

College students reported similar feelings. In an interview study of women's friendships in a small Midwestern college, Aleman (1997) discovered that friendships and talk outside of the classroom are mechanisms for learning and cognitive growth that also provides respite from academic stress and anxiety. Even in this small and relatively homogeneous setting, the students expressed concerns about peer judgment in the classroom describing impersonal relations with classmates and fearing criticism. "Women often gauged the risk of speaking in class by the degree to which they 'knew' the other class members." If they "knew" them, they would be trusted not to criticize their thinking in a degrading manner. In classrooms where they didn't know people, they were "unlikely to ask questions, express a minority opinion, play the devil's advocate, or publicly wrestle with ideas" (p. 36).

A study by Wentzel & Asher (1995) shows that interaction is not necessarily associated with high levels of peer acceptance, but these findings do more to raise methodological questions than to challenge the basic assumption about interaction and belongingness. Most studies of peer acceptance rely on peer nomination procedure in which students are asked to identify a limited number of students that they like best or least. Analyses typically focus only on these two groups of students ignoring those students not selected in either category. Wentzel & Asher extended the analysis of peer acceptance to look more closely at those "neglected" students who were neither very popular nor disliked. Relative to popular students, the scores of the neglected students were higher on all indicators of motivation, self-regulated learning, and prosocial behavior. Like their popular peers, these students had more frequent and positive interactions with their peers than those students who were disliked did. From the behavioral indicators, one can infer that motivational needs, including relatedness, were satisfied within this setting; but peer acceptance, as measured, was apparently not a valid indicator of or proxy for the sense of relatedness. One can assume that the nature of interaction with teachers and peers satisfied these needs, encouraging them to continue the consideration and prosocial behaviors.

Structuring Schools and Classes to Support Student Community

In the literature, three aspects of classroom practice seem to have an important impact on students' sense of relatedness through their effects on the frequency and nature of student interaction in the

classroom: methods of instruction, classroom climate, and authority relationships between teachers and students.

Instruction

In 1996,Leithwood and colleagues presented data showing that quality of instruction accounted for 46% of the variation in students' sense of belonging (Leithwood, Cousins, Jantzi, & Patsula, 1996). While their study relied on students' perceptions of different aspects of their classroom experience including teacher support, other research identifies two specific instructional strategies that relate directly to children's experience of relatedness: cooperative learning and dialogue.

The importance of cooperation in contrast with competition to enhance overall student motivation is well developed (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Covington,). Cooperative learning is also particularly significant for the development of peer relations. Cooperative learning directly affects the frequency of student interaction, and, if properly implemented also the nature of student interaction. In theory, structuring the work to require and reward group effort (positive interdependence) for task completion and for the learning of each individual group member insures a greater level and different quality of interaction than under competitive or individualistic learning conditions. The task is structured so members of the group need each other. The research on cooperative learning and elaborate discussions of the theoretical grounding for the process is extensive. For our purposes here, some of that research demonstrates that cooperative learning affects interpersonal attraction among students and enhances students' personal sense of belongingness (Johnson et al., 1983). Offering evidence from 98 empirical studies conducted between 1944 and 1982, Johnson and colleagues established that in cooperative learning situations, interaction among and between students is more frequent and more positive. In cooperative settings there were more incidences of helping behavior, greater satisfaction with the group experience, more frequent perceptions of group cohesiveness, and greater attraction to other group members. The quality of this interaction results in "stronger beliefs that one is personally liked, supported, and accepted by other students, that other students care about how much one learns, and that other students want to help one learn" (p. 33). This belief that one is cared about is, according to Baumeister and Leary (1995), a more important determinant of the sense of relatedness than reciprocity. The type of interaction also incorporates all the descriptive characteristics of "community" as defined by MacMillan and Chavis (1986).

Two other studies also looked at peer interaction as an outgrowth of cooperative learning. A dissertation study found that middle school students in cooperative learning settings had significantly more and better friends among classmates than those in non-cooperative settings. They developed more positive relationships and fewer negative relationships (Phelps, 1990). A later study (Jules, 1991) also documents the impact of cooperative learning on peer interaction outside of the learning situation preceding and following cooperative learning experiences. Prior to the cooperative learning experience (5 weeks, 25 periods @ 40 min.) the researchers observed students interacting in dyads, triads, and cliques. At the conclusion, cliques were no longer evident, friendship patterns had widened, and same race choices had declined. 73% of the students were perceived more positively after the experience than before.

In contrast, respondents in a study of dropouts described the depersonalization of traditional classrooms with desks lined up in rows (Altenbaugh, Engel, & Martin, 1995); "silent" students in another study longed for small group activities where they would know people better and be less frightened to express their opinions (Jones & Gerig, 1994). These structural arrangements in the classroom with their strict rules limiting movement and talking, according to Johnson et al. (1983), prevent students from getting to know their classmates on any but a superficial basis and allow stereotypes to continue unchallenged and unexplored.

Dewey (1958) and Vygotsky (1981) both emphasize the importance of social interaction as a basis for learning. Dialogue facilitates the development of ideas, but it can also help students to develop a better appreciation of others and to experience themselves as part of a supportive community. Explaining their rationale for emphasizing collaborative discussion as a strategy to enhance prosocial behavior, Battistich et al. (91) offer the premise that discussion in a supportive community where students have the opportunity to express personal opinions gives children the opportunity to discover that others care. Through such experiences, they develop feelings of trust, mutual respect, and solidarity. Gamoran & Nystrand (1992) affirm this position that "regardless of the activity in which students participate, discourse is a critical indicator of the extent to which school offers membership" (p. 40). While dialogue is an inherent part of cooperative learning, as a learning strategy, its use is not restricted to small group activity. Research, however, shows that students seldom get such opportunities as part of their classroom experience.

learning, the same pattern held. While friendship patterns had widened, the significant students remained the same and they were competent, confident, and socially skilled (Jules, 1991).

It is important to point out that none of the studies mentioned above specifically focused on the relationship between teacher perceptions and peer acceptance. In most cases, researchers gathered information from teachers either to describe behavioral patterns of accepted and rejected children or to confirm information gathered from peer reports. While none of the studies yield any information about causality, inherent in the research designs and discussions is the assumption that levels of teacher and peer acceptance respond to student behavior rather than the reverse. In light of other research, one could easily interpret the correlation data in a different way.

Anderman & Maehr (1994) tell us that children develop self-concepts based on information received from social comparisons with other children, especially as they move into adolescence. Status differentials emerge, as we have seen, from the time that children enter kindergarten (perhaps before). Those differentials solidify as students progress from class to class and by the time students enter secondary school, their status has been clearly defined by school authorities. Secondary schools, in general, are less supportive and more impersonal than elementary schools (Hargreaves, Earl, & Ryan, 1996). For less successful students, these conditions may be aggravated as "they receive direct messages in terms of track placement regarding their relative position in school" (Altenbaugh,et al.,1995 p.92). That students internalize these messages in ways that affect their relationships with peers is illustrated in the following study.

A study of predictors of peer rejection in grades K-3 (Taylor, 1989) provides more definitive evidence. In a small study of 54 children, Taylor gathered information on peer status (looking only at rejection), two forms of problem behavior (acting-out and shy/anxious), academic achievement and teacher preference when students were in K-1 and two years later when the remaining 30 were in grades 2 and 3. The findings showed that while all three predictors accounted for a substantial portion of variance in Times 1 and 2 (34% and 44% respectively) that only acting-out made a significant unique contribution to peer rejection. Acting out behavior remained stable over the 2 years of the study and played a more significant role in peer rejection than academic achievement. Teacher preference also made a significant contribution to the prediction of peer rejection in Time 2 and Time 2. In Time 2, teacher preference added an additional

have more influence on teacher perceptions than actual achievement. While tracking can contribute to social isolation and alienation, Bryk & Driscoll's finding that low-track students in parochial schools had very positive school experiences suggests that other aspects of school context are more important psychological determinants (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988). The Connell study (1995) shed light on this process establishing that student engagement influenced the level of perceived support from adults, suggesting that students are "receiving support depending on their level of engagement, with more engaged students receiving more support"(p.58).

Other studies show a relationship between teacher preference, peer acceptance, and academic performance from kindergarten through high school (Green et al., 1980; Kinderman, 1993; Ladd, 1990; Schwartz, 1981; Swift & Spivack, 1969; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). Teachers prefer students who are academically competent and engaged and their values are reflected in peer preferences. In a study of peer rejection and academic performance, Wentzel & Asher found that in a population of 423 middle school students, popular children were perceived as good students by teachers and peers while those rejected by peers were preferred less by teachers and perceived as poor students by peers and teacher. Swift & Spivack (1969) also found a relationship between academic achievement, teacher preference, and peer interaction. Teachers of regular public school and emotionally disturbed students rated students on academically related behaviors including relationship with teacher and peers. For both groups of students academic achievement was correlated with positive teacher and peer relationships. Higher achievers interacted more and had more positive relationships with teacher and peers.

In a study of 116 third graders in five rural classrooms, Green (1980) found that those children who were more accepted by their peers were those who were high on academic achievement, viewed more positively by the teacher, and engaged in more positive interactions with peers. Those disliked and rejected by peers had lower levels of achievement, had fewer positive interactions with peers and were preferred less by teachers. Observations found that these rejected children were less on task and had fewer positive interactions with other students than their more popular peers did.

Similar findings regarding the importance of ability as a basis for peer relations and the interplay between teacher assessment and peer acceptance are reported by Ladd (1990). Examining the relationship between friendships, peer acceptance, and school adjustment, he found that by the end of the second month

in school, K-children with higher mental age scores and greater preschool experience tended to receive higher ratings from teachers for academic behaviors and readiness. By the completion of the year, the study also determined that peer status had a more significant impact than friendships on adjustment significantly predicting school perceptions, school involvement, and performance. Again, peer acceptance correlated with school performance with rejected children having lowers levels of school performance and lower perceptions of perceived teacher support. These children were also less likely to maintain prior friendships over the school year.

The notion that engagement and competence influence teacher-student relationships is perhaps not as surprising as the idea that these factors also affect peer relationships. Academic accomplishment is one of the main indicators of school status, and status differentials have an important effect on the development of peer relationships (Elliott & Voss, 1974; Jules, 1991; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). There is a strong relationship between low achievement and low peer status (Kagan, 1990) with low achievers often systematically isolated by classmates (Bryan, 1976).

Kindermann's study (1993) shows the role that student engagement plays in the formation of natural peer groups and again highlights the role of teachers in shaping student perceptions. At the beginning of the school year, researchers obtained measures of 4th and 5th graders 'engagement from self-assessment and teacher reports. They found a significant correlation between both reports of engagement and group membership, with students affiliating with classmates who shared a similar level of engagement. Here again, however, the role of the teacher emerges in findings that this relationship was stronger when engagement was based on teacher reports rather than self-assessment. In other words, children affiliated with classmates who were perceived by the teacher to have similar engagement levels. At the end of the year, group membership had changed substantially (50% turnover rate). They were still homogeneous but only in terms of teacher-reported engagement. Self-assessment had been an important factor in group-composition initially, but by the end of the year, the primary predictor of membership was not self-report but teacher reported engagement. A study of friendship patterns in Trinidadian secondary schools finding that whether the status indicator was ethnicity, SES, or academic achievement, that students predictably chose someone of equal or higher status than themselves. While selections leveled after cooperative

- Those students who are shunned by peers are students who are perceived as less engaged or lower achievers by teachers.

Adult support is important. Using path analysis, Connell and colleagues demonstrated that adult support in school affects students' sense of competency, autonomy, and relatedness and that these effects are "over and above the effects of the adult support students receive at home" (Connell, et al., 1995). Higher levels of support from teachers contributed to higher levels of perceived competence, autonomous self-regulation, and feelings of greater emotional security with adults and peers at school. The development of these psychological processes was in turn linked to higher levels of engagement. Elliott & Voss (1974) also documented the relatively greater importance of relationships in school rather than home to students' sense of isolation and normlessness.

A great deal of research not reported here establishes that students receive differential treatment from teachers on basis of characteristics such as race, gender, class, ability, and even appearance and that differentiation begins early in the school career and increases as students progress through school.

Some students receive more support than others do, and the level of teacher support is related to levels of student engagement and student ability. Schwartz (1981) observed teachers distancing themselves from low-ranked pupils and, by examining end of the year elementary student reports found an increasing polarization between low and high track students with teacher comments about low-track students being exceedingly brief and negative. Interestingly many of the negative comments mentioned in the study-disruptive, nonconformist, withdrawn, daydreamers, non-participants-refer to interaction or classroom engagement patterns.

At the high school level, students in Altenbaugh et al. study reported teacher favoritism. The favorites, one explained, were "the kids that were real smart in class. The other ones, they just ignored altogether." Those teachers who had favorites would show it in different ways but "They was always nicer to those students and always mean to the others. ...If a kid missed a day of notes, he would give it to him and help him out, but he wouldn't the other students" (p. 87).

Elliott & Voss (1974) described an alienating tracking system for troublemakers and failures. Gamoran and Berends (1987) in their review of the research on tracking found that teachers were more positive towards high track than low track and that proschool behavior of high track students seemed to

Classroom Climate

To experience relatedness, students must feel that they are worthy of respect and that the others in their group or social context care for them. Their beliefs about themselves develop through their interactions. If interactions are positive and affirming, students will have a stronger sense of relatedness. This in turn reinforces and encourages similar behavior. On the contrary, if experiences are negative, if students receive information that they are not valued and that their behavior is unwelcome, their sense of relatedness suffers. Because they feel unwelcome or rejected, they are less likely to initiate "prosocial" behaviors, adopting instead withdrawal or rejection. The student's experience in the classroom, then, shapes self-perceptions and behavior.

Almost exclusively, discussions of community building in schools refer to adult-student relationships. Much of the research noted above, and much additional research unreported here, highlights the significance of a caring relationship between teacher and student. Teachers play a major role in determining whether students' feel cared for and a welcome part of the school community. Research suggests that teachers also influence the frequency and quality of relationships among students themselves by conveying information about student status that influences their perceptions of themselves and others. Teachers convey status information and students internalize those judgments whether about themselves or their peers. If that information is positive, the student will have a strong sense of acceptance and will be more likely to reach out to others establishing positive relationships. Similarly, other students will be more responsive to that student's overtures, validating the student's sense of community. Negative information, however, should have the opposite effect.

To support this argument, research tells us that

- Teacher support directly affects psychological processes and that, in the context of the classroom and school, teachers have a greater psychological impact than parents do.
- Students in classrooms receive differential treatment. Those more likely to receive teacher support are those perceived as having high ability and engagement.
- Students preferred by teachers are also more likely to be preferred by their classmates and vice versa.
- Students who are preferred by teachers and peers are those students who are perceived as academically more capable and more engaged.

10% of the variance beyond that contributed by peer rejection in Time 1. If the teacher liked the child in kindergarten, peer rejection decreased in grades 2 and 3. The study supports several important conclusions: that behavior plays a more important role than achievement in peer rejection; that peer rejection did not predict later changes in problem behavior; and that teacher preference was a significant predictor of peer rejection.

An earlier experimental study by Flanders and Havumaki (1960) (cited in Schmuck & Schmuck, 1997) demonstrated how communication and supportive responses from teachers positively affected peer-group friendship nominations. In classrooms, teachers directed supportive comments only to selected students and not to others. At the completion of the week, these students received significantly more friendship group nominations than those students who had not received support.

Schwartz (1981) conducted an ethnographic study to examine the impact of tracking on student social organization. Earlier studies by Lacey (1970) & Hargreaves (1967), the author reported, determined that as high and low tracks are academically differentiated, they become socially polarized as well. High tracks develop a pro-academic subculture that links social status to academic achievement. In low tracks, status comes from defiance of school and teacher norms. This study sought to better understand the processes leading to these outcomes through systematic observation of teacher and student behavior. Schwartz examined student records and gathered additional data through sociograms and interviews with parents and students. The study focused on 3rd and 4th grade classes in 3 elementary schools and 7th and 9th grade classes in a junior high school. The schools differed in size and ethnic composition. One New York City elementary school was large (1100) and predominantly Hispanic and black. Two of the schools were ethnically homogeneous but predominantly working class with one over 99% white and 1 predominantly black. The third was diverse, approximately 33% black, white and Hispanic. Despite differences in level and ethnicity, interaction patterns in the four schools were similar. During teacher-directed activities, top track students engaged in "sneaking behavior" appearing to conform to behavioral expectations while actually interacting covertly with peers. Low-track students engaged in openly disruptive behavior, blatantly defying the classroom rules. In informal class time, while students are working on their own or in groups, high track students work cooperatively with their peers in academic classes, but adopt challenging behaviors in non-academic classes where their behavior won't jeopardize their academic status. In

conversations with peers, the high track students provided a lot of support to one another and expressed their feelings of identity. Students in the low tracks, however, criticized one another and tried to differentiate themselves from their low track peers whom they labeled as stupid. From this data Schwartz theorized that the tracking system constitutes a formal hierarchy in which rank predominates. The students' understanding of their own status in this system affects how they evaluate their classroom situation and their classmates, how others rank them socially and educationally, and how teachers perceive and interact with them. "The higher the rank, the more likely they are to be satisfied with academic placement, to choose like-ranked peers as friends, to be popular with grade mates as well as classmates, and to be the object of their teachers' positive expectations" (p. 109). Probably the most important finding and unique contribution of the study deals with relationships among lower track students. As Schwartz explains, "their perception of the worth and attractiveness of these peers determines if and how they choose to interact with them" (p.110) As sociogram data indicate, high track students chose others of the same rank. Those in the lower track also picked peers from the higher track but these choices were not reciprocated. High track students clustered into dense reciprocal groups and exclusive cliques, while low-track students were linked, not in groups but in reciprocal pairs. Consistent with other studies cited above, academic rank and popularity went hand in hand.

> High-tracked students come to view their classmates as individuals whose high social status is linked to their own academic success. Group identification and solidarity become equated with academic superiority. Popularity with peers and their treatment by teachers set them apart from others socially as well as academically. Students see themselves collectively as individuals whose prize position is both demonstrated and maintained by their social grouping into exclusive cliques." (Schwartz, 1981, p. 116)

Low track students, in comparison, found their social worth by distancing themselves from their peers just as teachers do. Students seem to incorporate negative teacher messages into their interactions with each other and the lack of esteem that they receive from teachers and students in other tracks affects their ability to establish positive relationships with their own peers. They reject those who are like themselves, separate themselves from the group, and satisfy their social needs by seeking out a single

friend who is like themselves but unlike the others. Their lack of popularity with even their own classmates promotes competitive, disruptive, and largely dyadic interaction. As Schwartz explains: "group activity would belie the very label they seek to deny" (p. 117).

If teachers inadvertently undermine students' sense of community in the classroom, the reverse is also true. Prosocial behavior can be learned and is best learned in an environment of caring. Experimental studies of children from infancy through 8 years found that children learn through imitation and that learning was greatest when experimenter and child had a nurturing relationship and when the adult modeled caring behavior for others in real interactions with those in need. Exposure to hypothetical or vicarious experiences was ineffective (Radke-Yarrow & Zahn-Waxler, 1984). This suggests that if students are to develop and adopt prosocial behaviors, they need to see these behaviors encouraged, explained, and modeled in the classroom.

Battistich et al. (1991) designed a comprehensive five-year intervention program to enhance prosocial behaviors among students in three elementary schools. Several assumptions underlay this design. The first was that teachers indirectly control peer socialization experiences by determining the conditions under which children interact. The second was that adults can encourage prosocial behavior by communicating and enforcing prosocial norms and values and by providing opportunities for students to exercise autonomy, work collaboratively with others, and participate in group problem-solving and decision making. Using a comparison group of schools that had not received the program, the researchers determined that students in the program engaged in more spontaneous prosocial behavior than students in the comparison classes and that these differences were statistically significant when teachers' competence and student participation in cooperative activities were controlled. They also found differences in conflict resolution and social problem-solving skills with children in the program demonstrating greater perspective taking skills and more consideration of other's needs. Students more frequently considered the effects of their actions and selected more cooperative problem-solving strategies. The children also showed a greater commitment to democratic values expressing stronger beliefs in personal responsibility to express opinions and the right of all group members to influence group decisions, and a willingness to compromise.

Authority Relations/Autonomy

In theory, the three basic needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are integral and interdependent. The previous section noted that supportive relations facilitate autonomy. Researchers argue the reverse as well. Just as relatedness enhances experience of autonomy, autonomy supports the development of relatedness. When children experience autonomy in relations with adults, their relationships with adults, parents, and teachers, will be stronger [Ryan, Stiller, & Lynch (1994) cited by Ryan, 1995]. They are more likely to accept adult authority and adopt acceptable social behaviors in the classroom. This is an important point because it addresses an assumption that to foster independence among adolescents requires a reduction in personal closeness, a point that Ryan disputes theoretically and empirically (Ryan, 1991; Ryan & Lynch, 1989; Ryan & Powelson, 1991)

Only 6 studies reviewed here deal directly or indirectly with the relationship between autonomy and relatedness. Studies described previously (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989) (Grolnick et al., 1991) shows that control strategies of parents, as well as involvement, affect students' psychological state and that these in turn affect school behavior and performance. Specifically, children who experience autonomy demonstrated greater self-regulation or internalization, less acting out and greater classroom competence, characteristics that are linked to engagement and through engagement to teacher and peer acceptance.

Deci, et al. (1981) found a similar relationship in the classroom with teachers' control orientations influence classroom climate and student motivation. The children in classes of teachers who were autonomy-supportive were more intrinsically motivated and had higher perceptions of their cognitive competence and self-worth than did students in classrooms with controlling teachers. Each of these outcomes could also predictably affect student's relationships with peers.

In their intervention strategy, Battistich et al. (1991) emphasize autonomy support through authentic discipline and shared decision-making arguing that children who experience shared authority in the classroom are more cooperative and socially skilled. While their intervention shows positive effects on social behavior of students, there is insufficient evidence from this study alone showing the relative contribution of students' experience of autonomy.

In an interview study, Allen (1995) explored elementary students' views on decision-making in their classrooms and schools finding that students were well aware of the ability to influence decisions.

Between schools and classes, there were wide variations in students' perceptions of their autonomy ranging from absolute powerlessness to feelings that they could change almost anything. The dialogue illustrates how these feelings might affect their relationships with their teachers, their enthusiasm about school, and their involvement in the classroom but did not specifically examine this point.

As part of their studies examining self-system processes and engagement in the school context, Connell & Wellborn (1991) surveyed teachers and parents about their level of involvement with and autonomy support that they provide to students. Both teachers and parents reported that they provided less autonomy and were less involved with students who were disaffected. Their findings again showed that parent and teacher interaction differed depending on the student's level of engagement and that the enacted strategies are those that predictably contribute further to disengagement.

From their reviews of the research Kagan (1990) and Battistich et al., (1991, 1995) assert that the children of parents who use power-assertive techniques are less social, more hostile, more disaffiliated, and less well-adjusted. In addition, high demand for compliance, combined with low concern for the child's needs, is associated with low social competence, low esteem and aggressiveness. Conversely, autonomy is associated with social competence as well as favorable attitudes toward school and teacher.

According to deCharms (1968), the experience of being a pawn (having little control or autonomy) leads to a sense of alienation. He also convincingly shows that teachers can learn to utilize autonomy supportive strategies in the classroom and that students' experience of themselves as origins leads to gains in motivation and achievement (1976). This study needs to be reexamined to determine if changes in the classroom environment or student motivation also affected peer and teacher relationships.

That autonomy plays an important part in growth and development is established. The research reviewed here suggests that students' experience of autonomy at home and at school influences their motivation and classroom behavior in the classroom. We know that behavioral characteristics affect teacher and peer acceptance in the classroom and the level of autonomy support that students receive. That autonomy may influence peer relationships through its effects on self-perceptions and behavior seems possible and even likely; but it is not established empirically. Aggressive behavior is very definitely associated with teacher and peer rejection and low self-esteem is an unlikely correlate of prosocial behavior; but this relationship is not one that has been directly examined in the research reported here.

Other Organizational Characteristics

In the review, grouping practices emerges as an important issue in understanding the development of student relationships in school. One study looked at the impact of teaming on social bonding: with peers, teachers, and school using survey responses from 4761 7th graders in 11 teamed and non-teamed schools in urban and suburban schools from four sectors of the country (Arhar & Kromrey, 1993). Responses differed depending on socioeconomic status of the schools with significant effects only in low SES schools. In the low SES schools, school organization had a significant effect on peer and teacher bonding with mean scores for students in teamed schools significantly higher than in non-teamed schools. In both schools peer-bonding scores were lower than school or teacher bonding.

In the review, grouping practices emerges as an important issue in understanding the development of student relationships in school but there is little research presented here. One study reported here presents inconclusive results about the impact of teaming showing effects on peer bonding only in low-income schools. While grouping such as teaming should increase opportunities for interaction among students in the classroom, it would be necessary to determine whether or not interaction patterns actually changed with the introduction of the team structure.

Tracking, departmentalization, inter-age classes, and maintaining intact classes over several grade levels are other grouping practices that influence peer interaction and potentially offer interesting insights into developing school community. From a district perspective, students typically remain with a cohort during all or a large part of their elementary experience. At the secondary level, however, students often merge from different schools. To what extent do schools recognize or respond to students' needs to get to know new classmates with whom they may have no familiarity? And, how do grouping patterns at the secondary level influence the development of friendships or peer acceptance patterns? At the university level, there is increasing emphasis on the importance of cohorts for performance, this, too, would seem to be a promising line of inquiry at the secondary level as well.

Conclusion

Belongingness is an extremely important concept. Society is confronted with what should be viewed as devastating indicators of serious emotional problems among students. Teen suicide, in general, is the second leading cause of adolescent death in the U.S. and Canada; many of these suicides are triggered

by school-based incidents. Incidences of student violence towards other students and teachers, regardless of their frequency, stun us as a society. Combined with drugs, eating problems, depression, drop outs, teen pregnancy, these, too, are "symptoms of a society in which self-hatred has become an epidemic" (Kunc, p.37). According to Baumeister and Leary (1995) many emotional problems such as these " result from people's failure to meet their belongingness needs" (p. 521). As Jones (1996) describes the problem, "...too many of our youth have crawled beneath the blanket of despair and are suffocating from a lack of human connections" (p. 2). Even for those students who succeed in school on standard achievement criteria lack of engagement with learning is a serious problem.

Discussions of these problems on a policy level seldom focus on students' need for belongingness or the role of the school in meeting these belongingness needs, although there are notable exceptions (Noddings, (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Hargreaves et al., 1996; Kunc, 1992; Newmann, 1981). Even among those educators who strongly endorse the need for school community, the predominant focus is on changing the nature of teacher/student relationships and there is relatively little attention to developing sense of community by enhancing peer relationships among students themselves. As Deci et al (91) reported, there are no studies that examine student relationships as source of belongingness. Similarly, there is little research that examines the role of the school in shaping peer relationships and thereby satisfying students' needs for belongingness.

Organizational research, as indicated earlier, has consistently emphasized the interplay between work conditions and worker performance. Motivational research has also developed a new appreciation of this interplay recognizing the impact of context on motivation. Organizational research in different organizational settings including schools has identified worker relationships, collegiality and collaboration as important dimensions affecting worker motivation and performance. Underlying collegiality is this need for relatedness and belonging.

As Weiner (1990) explained, the need for belongingness is very important; and there is a need to cross paradigms, to combine forces, and to begin to look at students' motivational needs in the context of schools:

> Belongingess must be brought into play when examining school motivation. This has been implicitly part of the trend toward cooperative learning, but it must be explicitly

> recognized and studied. In sum, school motivation cannot be divorced from the social fabric in which it is embedded, which is one reason that claims made upon motivational psychologists to produce achievement change must be modest. There will be no "person-in-space" for the field of classroom motivation unless there is corresponding social change." p. 621

With respect to students, the conditions in the classroom and school influence students' feelings about themselves and these in turn are reflected in student engagement and achievement. Not all students experience alienation to the same extent, yet, for the most part, students and researchers describe schools as alienating institutions (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Hargreaves et al., 1996; Johnson, Farkas, & Bers, 1997)Newmann, 1981; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989). Although there is relatively little research on peer relationships, from the work reported here as others, it would seem that if there is a "peer culture", it is not necessarily one that satisfies students need for belongingness. In general, peer support is missing. Harassment, whether in the form of sexual harassment (Shakeshaft et al) or bullying (McNamara, 1997) tends to be pervasive in schools and certain groups of students experience rejection not only from peers but from adults as well. While some students experience academic success in school, many don't. If we apply McMillan and Chavis' criteria for community, it would appear that many students do not experience a sense of belonging in their peer group or school community. They do not sense their own importance, and cannot rely on other members of the group –whether teachers or peers- to meet their shared needs. While they may have a shared emotional connection and recognize the group's importance to them, these feelings or needs are not always addressed.

To what extent do workplace conditions that students experience in schools affect the quality of their learning and their levels of achievement? To what extent could changes in the workplace enhance the quality of learning for students of all ability levels? To what extent would a strong sense of community among students as well as among teachers and students affect students' emotional well being and learning? In what ways can we as researchers and educators illuminate, explore, and address these issues?

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